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ABSTRACT

Noting that students' perceptions and feelings contribute to their attitudes toward specific content areas, teachers, and the school experience, this study examined perceptions of second graders about physical education and physical education teachers. Participating were 61 second graders from 4 classes in 2 schools. The students were videotaped for three class sessions and coded for successful and unsuccessful practice trials of each skill performed in the three classes. Students were then categorized as high, average, and low performance. Twenty-nine of the students who had parental permission were later interviewed regarding whether they liked physical education, what they liked and disliked about physical education, important things to learn in physical education, and characteristics of good and bad physical education teachers. Findings indicated that students liked physical education, primarily because they viewed it as fun. They identified good teachers as nice and knowledgeable and poor teachers as mean, too strict, and angry at students. For each of the interview questions, the most prevalent responses were provided by students from all skill performance groups. Students from the high skill performance group were more specific in their responses than others. Students in low and average skill performance groups made more references to non-physical education behaviors, safety, and injury in their responses. (Contains 29 references and 7 tables.) (KB)

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PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH, AVERAGE AND LOW PERFORMANCE SECOND GRADERS ABOUT PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of elementary students about physical education and physical education teachers. Second grade students in four different classes of two different schools were videotaped for three class sessions. Subjects (N=61) were coded for successful and unsuccessful practice trials of each skill they performed in the three classes. Success rates for each student were determined and students were placed into a high (H) performance category (success rates 79.2% to 93.8%, n=17), average (A) performance category (48.6% to 75.6%, n=31), or a low (L) performance group (9.7% to 43.45%, n=13). Of the subjects coded for placement into performance groups, 29 students (H=7, A=12, L=10), who returned permission slips allowing them to be interviewed, were given the following prompts: 1) "Do you like PE?" ("Why?" or "Why not?"); 2) "Tell me something you really like about PE."; 3) "Tell me something you dislike about PE."; 4) "What is the most important thing you should learn in PE?"; 5) "What is not very important to learn in PE?"; 6) "What makes a good PE teacher?"; and 7) "What makes a bad PE teacher?" Student responses were qualitatively analyzed according to references made when answering. Overall, students liked physical education. For each of the seven questions, the most prevalent responses were provided by students from all skill performance groups (high, average and low). However, each question had a variety of reference themes. In general, students from the high skill performance group were more specific in their responses ("I like Ghost Buster Tag" vs. "I like all the games."). Students in low and average skill performance groups made more references to Non-PE Behaviors, Safety, and Injury in their responses.

PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH, AVERAGE AND LOW PERFORMANCE SECOND GRADERS ABOUT PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Students' perceptions and feelings about what they learn and where they learn has generated the interest of scholars, practitioners, and those in positions to make decisions about school programs. These perceptions and feelings contribute to a student's attitude toward specific content areas, toward a teacher, and toward the school experience. There has been an increased amount of research conducted on student perceptions about physical education and what should be taught in physical education, possibly because of the influence attitude may play in future participation in physical activity.

Previous research indicates that, overall, students feel positive about physical education (Butcher, 1982; Coe, 1984; Rice, 1988; Scott & West, 1990; Solmon & Carter, 1995; Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1993). Specific aspects of physical education that students enjoy that have been reported in the literature include: the variety of activities (Rice, 1988; Solmon & Carter, 1995); the atmosphere of fun and freedom (Browne, 1992; Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Solmon & Carter, 1995); enjoying physical activity (Browne, 1992); being with friends (Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1993); and enjoying learning new skills (Browne, 1992). In addition, students like physical education because of specific outcomes, such as winning (Tannehill et al., 1994).

However, some research suggests that many students like other subjects better than physical education, that it is not important, or it is irrelevant (Tannehill, Romar,

O'Sullivan, England, & Rosenberg, 1994; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992). Additional negative aspects of physical education that have been reported include: class periods that are too brief (Rice, 1988); other subjects are more important to career goals (Brown, 1992); other courses are more important for college (Scantling, Strand, Lackey, & McAleese, 1995); clothing or the inconvenience of changing clothes for physical education (Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Rice, 1988); methods of evaluation (Luke & Sinclair, 1991); and feeling uncomfortable or at risk in performing skills (Portman, 1995; Tannehill et al., 1994).

Research has also indicated that students have differing feelings about the different content areas within physical education, and curriculum content has been found to be a very influential factor in determining positive or negative attitudes of physical education students (Figley, 1985; Luke & Sinclair, 1988). Overall, team sports and games tend to be preferred (Coe, 1984; Flohr & Williams, 1997; McKenzie, Alcaraz, & Sallis, 1994; Rice, 1988; Tannehill et al., 1994; Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1993), fitness improvement is an important goal (Tannehill et al., 1994; Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1994), running and fitness activities are frequently disliked (Flohr & Williams, 1997; Luke & Sinclair, 1991; McKenzie et al., 1994; Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1993), and fitness testing is misunderstood (Flohr & Williams, 1997; Hopple & Graham, 1995). Interestingly, even when adult elementary preservice teachers were asked what they least liked about their elementary physical education, "fitness testing" received the highest percentage of responses (Bowyer, 1996).

Examining students by skill subgroups in physical education has also generated much more interest in the recent years. The literature suggests that students of different

ability levels have different experiences and feelings about physical education (Carlson, 1995; Nugent & Faucette, 1995; Silverman, 1999; Silverman, Woods, & Subramanian, 1999). In particular, low skilled students tend to view physical education as a place where isolation, alienation, and humiliation are common, and success is uncommon (Carlson, 1995; Portman, 1995; Walling & Martinek, 1995). As a result, these students develop coping strategies and avoidance behaviors ranging from becoming a spectator, to self banishment, to deferring to high skilled students in games (Silverman, 1999). For these students, it is not surprising that negative attitudes about physical education, and possibly physical activity, can carry into adulthood.

Limited research exists on how students feel about physical education teachers. Research at the secondary level shows that students appreciate physical education teachers who are friendly (Rice, 1988), who have high expectations and are focused on learning (Luke & Sinclair, 1991), and who are sensitive and care about students (Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Stinson, 1992). Results from other research (Scantling et al., 1995) indicate that the physical education teacher has no impact on secondary students' choices to not take physical education as an elective. In addition, results of research on elementary children by Luke (1991) showed that the behavior of the physical education teacher was one of the least important determinants of children's attitude toward physical education.

The need and importance of talking to students in physical education to gain insights into their perceptions has been recognized (Graham, 1995a, 1995b; Hopple & Graham, 1995; Smith, 1991; Solmon & Carter, 1995). By examining student perceptions, researchers and scholars can have a more global view of learning to better understand

complexities of learning in the physical education arena (Silverman & Subramanian, 1999). The majority of research on student attitudes in physical education has been conducted on secondary students. This is unfortunate, considering attitude development begins quite early. Extremely limited research exists on how elementary students, particularly those of different ability levels, feel about the physical education class and physical education teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of elementary students about physical education and physical education teachers. Specifically, this study asked second graders in high, average and low performance groups if and why they liked physical education, what they liked and disliked about it, what should and should not be learned in physical education, and what makes a "good" physical education teacher and a "bad" physical education teacher.

Method and Data Sources

Overview

Two classes each of two physical education teachers at two different schools in Western Washington were used for this research endeavor. The data collection involved videotaping second grade physical education classes and interviewing second graders regarding their perceptions of physical education and physical education teachers. The researcher followed all appropriate procedures in obtaining permission from the school district to conduct the research.

Instruction

Two classes each of two teachers at two different schools were used for data collection. Class A and B were both taught by a female teacher. Class C and Class D were taught by a male teacher at another school. The researcher instructed the teachers to teach "normally," and the teachers made all instructional decisions regarding content and methodology for each class. The content of the classes varied between the two teachers, although both teachers included a variety of locomotor skills in their lessons. Additionally, both teachers presented the same content to each class they taught. In other words, the content of Class A and Class B was identical, and the content of Class C and Class D was identical. Figure 1 describes the content of the three sessions for each class.

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insert Figure 1 about here

Class A, B: Session 1. The first class session for Classes A and B involved a tagging game ("Three Deep") and throwing and catching stations. Station activities included: underhand and overhand throws to targets on the wall; throw and catch with partner; throw to self (against a wall or in the air); and throw and catch with a partner using a velcro mitt to catch. Due to the time it took for the teacher to demonstrate and explain the various stations, students were able to participate in only one station.

Class A, B: Session 2. The second class session for Class A and Class B involved essentially the same content as the first session. After participating in a tag game ("Three Deep"), students rotated to the various throwing and catching stations. Students did not complete the rotation of all stations.

Class A, B: Session 3. The final class sessions for Classes A and B again involved a tagging game ("Pac Man Tag"), which included a variety of locomotor skills (skipping, hopping, jumping, running, etc.). The game was followed by the throwing and catching stations. Between the three class sessions, students were able to participate at every station.

Class C, D: Session 1. The class began with teacher-lead warm-up exercises which included lunges, arm curls, underhand throwing motion, and a variety of locomotor skills. After that, students learned and practiced the underhand serve against a wall. The classes concluded with the game of "Garbage," a game in which one team attempts to place more balls on the opponent's side of the court, while incorporating the underhand serve.

Class C, D: Session 2. A variety of station activities were in this session. These activities included scooter travel, leaping over a rope, running a zig zag pattern through cones, and partner Tug of War. Students selected and rotated stations on their own, although they were encouraged to go to different stations and to go to those stations that were not too crowded. At the end of the lesson, students participated in the game of "Cooperative Musical Hoops," while using a variety of locomotor skills (skipping, hopping, jumping, jogging).

Class C, D: Session 3. This session involved a variety of combatives. Although each class (C and D) participated in the combatives in a slightly different order, both classes participated in each combative. These included: thumb wrestle; arm wrestle; "Quick Hands" (each person attempts slap the other's hands); "Turn the Turtle" (student attempts to tip over partner as he/she is on all fours); "Turn the Eagle" (student attempts to roll partner over as he/she lays "spread eagle"); "Back to Back" (partners sit back to back

with elbows hooked and attempt pull partner over on side); and "Knock Down the Pin" (partners join both hands and attempt to pull/push the other partner so that he/she tips over a bowling pin with a foot). Throughout the lesson, students changed partners randomly.

Videotaping Procedures

Each of the four classes was videotaped for three sessions, resulting in a total of twelve taped sessions. All class sessions were taped using a two-camera split screen video set-up. The two cameras were positioned in one corner of the gym, in a manner that would allow each student to be viewed throughout the lesson. As a student disappeared from the view of one camera, he/she would reappear in the view of the other camera. The video images were fed into a Panasonic Digital AV Mixer so that the monitor image was a split screen. Essentially all activity in the gymnasium was captured on film. Time was superimposed on the video image with a Panasonic Character Generator. Sound was recorded on the videotape via a cordless microphone (Teacher 2) or the gymnasium sound system (Teacher 1). The researcher was able to clearly hear each teacher throughout the lessons. Each student wore the same numbered pinafore for each session, so that he/she could be identified by number (no names used) in subsequent coding.

Videotape Coding Procedures

Students who were in attendance for all three of the videotape sessions were used for coding (N=61). The researcher viewed each videotape one time for each of these students. For each viewing, the student was tracked for the entire lesson and each skill performance was coded (successful or unsuccessful). If the student correctly performed the movement goal (determined by what the teacher instructed the children to do), a

successful trial was recorded on the data sheet. If the student performed incorrectly, an unsuccessful trial was recorded. During Session 3 of Class C and D, students participated in combatives. With the assistance of the teacher, the researcher identified the movement goal for each activity (e.g. pull partner over, maintain balance, etc.), and success was determined if the student met the movement goal. During station activities, individual trials were coded if there were discreet, separate skills involved, such as leaping over a rope. If the movement goal was a continuous sequence, such as running through cones, a single trial was coded. For tagging games, students were coded with a successful trial if they successfully dodged or tagged another student. In all tag games and locomotor skill practice, walking and running were not used for coding of trials; however, other locomotor skills (such as skipping or hopping) were used. For each student, data were summed across the three class sessions. The success rate (total successful attempts divided by total attempts) for each student was calculated for all skills in general.

Skill Performance Subgroup Determination

Success rates, expressed in percentages, for each of the 61 students were rank ordered. The researcher identified natural breaks in the percentages. It was determined that students who had success rates of 79.2% to 93.8% (highest) were grouped into the high (H) skill performance group (n=17). This is consistent with literature which suggests that 80% success is a high rate of success. Students who had success rates of 48.6% to 75.6% were categorized into the average (A) skill performance group (n=31). Students in the low (L) skill performance group had success rates of 9.7% (lowest) to 43.4% (n=13).

Interview Procedures

A total of 43 students returned signed permission slips granting permission to be interviewed. Each student was interviewed individually by the researcher during a regular physical education class session, after all videotaping had been completed; however, interviews were conducted prior to the coding of the videotapes to determine performance groups. Therefore, the researcher did not know which subjects were in the different performance groups (H, A, L). Subjects in Class A and Class B were interviewed in a hallway outside the gymnasium when the physical education class was conducted indoors, or at a table next to the playground if the class was conducted outdoors. Subjects in Class C and D were all conducted indoors, and students were interviewed in the physical education teacher's office next to the gymnasium, or in a covered area just outside the gymnasium door. The researcher had the list of students to be interviewed and students were interviewed in no particular order. Interviews were audiotaped while the researcher took notes on interview forms, which provided the following open ended questions/prompts: 1) "Do you like PE?" (If "yes:" "Why?" If "no:" "Why not?"); 2) "Tell me something you really like about PE."; 3) "Tell me something you dislike about PE."; 4) "What is the most important thing you should learn in PE?"; 5) "What is not very important to learn in PE?"; 6) "What makes a good PE teacher?"; and 7) "What makes a bad PE teacher?" Individual interviews lasted about 15 minutes.

Interview Transcription Procedures

Audiotapes were transcribed by the researcher and qualitatively analyzed. With the exception of one student, the subjects' responses to the prompts were brief and

directly addressed the question. Each response to each question was reviewed and initially grouped into preliminary categories to identify emergent themes. Categories and themes were selected based on the specific references that appeared in the subjects' responses. For example, when prompted with "What do you really like about PE?" and the subject responded with "Ghost Buster Tag," the researcher categorized that reference into "Specific Game." Categories of responses were generated for each question, although several questions had the some of the same categories. For example, the category of "Specific Skill" emerged from responses of four of the prompts. The process of review, categorizing and grouping was repeated a minimum of ten times over a period of three months by the researcher to form themes and categorize with consistency. Categories and responses were then reviewed by an elementary physical educator (not affiliated with the study) to validate the researcher's decisions. Individual student responses that contained reference statements that fell under more than one category were placed in each relevant theme. For example, "You get to do lots of activities and you get to have a lot of fun," includes a reference to General Curriculum and Fun. Responses and themes from the three skill performance groups were compared.

Subjects for This Study

Sixty-one students were coded on skill performance, although not all of these students returned permission slips allowing them to be interviewed. A total of 43 students were interviewed, although only 29 of them were in attendance for all three videotaped sessions. Therefore, for this study, 29 students' interview responses were used. Of this number, seven were from the high skill performance group, twelve from the average skill performance group, and ten were from the low skill performance group.

Findings

Overall

The second graders liked physical education, which is consistent with much of the prior research. For each of the seven questions, the most prevalent responses were provided by subjects in each skill performance group. However, each question had a variety of reference themes, especially those questions related to physical education teachers. In general, students from the low and average performance groups were more general in some of their responses ("I like the activities" vs. "I like Ghost Buster Tag") than those students in the high skill performance group. When looking at all questions, students in low and average skill performance groups also made more references to Non-PE Behaviors ("You shouldn't learn to hit people") and Safety/Injury ("I don't like it when I get hurt") in their responses.

Question 1: "Do you like PE?" If "yes:" "Why?" If "no:" "Why not?"

All students responded with a "Yes" to the initial question. Answers to the follow-up question ("Why?") are presented in Table 1 by frequency, reference, and skill performance group.

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insert Table 1 about here

There were 16 references to "Fun" (H=4, A=6, L=6), which included statements like "Because it's fun," and "I just think it's really fun and I enjoy it." There were 13 references to the General Curriculum (H=1, A=6, L=6) such as "Cos you get to do a lot of activities and stuff," and "Because there's lots of games." References such as "You get

to do a lot of exercise," and "You get to run around a get some exercise," were categorized into General Exercise category (H=1, A=5, L=5), which consisted of 11 different references. Other references were made regarding Specific Skill (H=2, A=3, L=4), such as "Because of the stuff we do like throwing and swinging and hitting." In addition, four references (H=1, L=3) were made regarding Specific Benefits ("It works your heart and stuff."), two references (H=1, A=1) regarding Environment/Setting ("The reason I don't like music and library is because you sit down. I don't really like to sit down that much."), one reference (L=1) to a Specific Game/Activity ("Because there's lots of good stations."), one reference (L=1) to Equipment ("Because you get to do the frisbees."); one reference (A=1) to a Specific Event ("Because we do Field Day."); one reference (A=1) to Social ("You get to see your best friend."); and one reference (H=1) of Do Not Know. A total of 60 references appeared in the subjects' responses.

Question 2: "Tell me something you really like about PE."

There were 35 references in the responses to Question 2. Table 2 contains the response reference frequencies by skill performance group for this question.

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insert Table 2 about here

There were 17 references (H=5, A= 8, L=4) to a Specific Game/Activity. These included statements such as "I really like jump roping," and "A game that I really like, and so does a lot of other kids, it's practically everybody's favorite game, is Ghost Busters." There were five references (H=1, A=2, L=2) to General Curriculum ("Well, the first thing I like about PE is that you play all these good kind of games."), four references

(H=2, A=2) to Specific Equipment ("When I was playing with the parachute."); three references (H=1, L=2) to a Specific Sport ("Playing basketball."); three references (H=1, A=1, L=1) to Free Choice/Choice Day ("I do like free time!"); two references (A=1, L=1) to General Equipment ("I like playing with the equipment."), and one reference (L=1) to Social ("That all my friends are there.").

Question 3: "Tell me something you dislike about PE."

There was a total of 34 references in the subjects' responses. Table 3 includes the types of references made the by subjects, and their frequencies by skill performance group.

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insert Table 3 about here

There were 15 references (H=5, A=8, L=2) to a Specific Game/Activity. These included statements such as, "Juggling," and "The jump roping. I really don't like it." Five references (H=2, A=1, L=3) were related to Non-Success (e.g. "Getting messed up in the gams," and "It's when there's tag. There's a kid, he always goes for me. He had a wide open chance to tag the fastest kid in the class, and he just said 'bye' and went for me."). Two references (H=1, A=1) related to Injury ("When you fall. I've fallen lots of times and slammed against the wall sometimes."). In addition, there were two references (L=2) that related to Low Activity Level ("Like just sitting down."); two references (H=1, L=1) dealing with a Specific Sport ("Basketball."); two references (A=1, L=1) relating to General Curriculum ("The games."); two references (L=2) to Getting Tired/Sweaty ("Getting so tired!"); one reference (A=1) to Lack of Choice ("You have to, uhm, do

something you don't want to do, like if you don't want to play one of those games."); one reference (A=1) to Other Students' Behavior ("Everybody talks and stuff."); and one reference to (L=1) General Exercise ("You have to do all this exercise.").

Question 4: "What is the most important thing you should learn in PE?"

Table 4 presents the frequency of response references by skill performance group. There were 37 references in the second graders' responses.

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insert Table 4 about here

There were six references (H=1, A=3, L=2) to Listen to Teacher ("To listen! Some people don't know how to listen."), five references (H=1, A=1, L=3) to Benefits of Exercise ("To not just sit around in the house and watch TV, and you should go out and get your exercise and run and play games out in the yard."), and five references (H=2, A=2, L=1) to General Exercise ("You should learn exercises."). In addition, there were three references (H=1, A=1, L=1) to Safety ("How to be safe."); three references (A=1, L=2) to General Curriculum ("You should learn, like, how to do all the subjects in PE."); three references (H=1, A=2) to Specific Skill ("Probably how to throw."); two references (A=1, L=1) to Equipment ("How to use the PE equipment correctly."); two references (A=1, L=1) to a Specific Game ("Wall of China. Some people don't know how to play that."); two references (A=1, L=1) to the Rules ("The game rules."); two references (A=1, L=1) to Fun ("How to have fun!"); one reference (L=1) regarding learning About Body ("About muscles and to make them stronger."); and one reference (A=1) to Stretching

("That the most important thing to do is stretch"). Finally, two students made references (H=1, A=1) to Do Not Know.

Question 5: "What is not very important to learn in PE?"

Table 5 contains the frequencies by skill performance group of each response references. A total of 34 references appeared in the students' responses.

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insert Table 5 about here

Some students appeared to have difficulty identifying what should not be learned in physical education, as evidenced by the eleven responses of Do Not Know (H=3, A=6, L=2). In addition, there were six references (H=2, A=2, L=2) to Specific Game/Activity ("Running."), and five references (H=1, L=4) to Previously Learned ("Well, I think that I already know how to throw."). Other responses included five references (A=2, L=3) to Non-PE Behaviors ("How to get drinks all the time."); two references (L=2) to a Specific Skill ("How to skip."); two references (H=1, L=1) to General Curriculum ("When you play games that you've already played."); one reference (H=1) to Specific Equipment ("Uh, frisbees."); one reference (A=1) to a Specific Sport ("Something, like, I learned, but I just don't want to do it, like T ball."); and one reference (A=1) to Exercise Principles ("Well, something not good to health is like, my mom's friend, she was running really fast, and uhm, she ran so fast that she had to have a surgery on her heart. Shouldn't learn to exercise too hard.").

Question 6: "What makes a good PE teacher?"

There was a variety of themes in the 47 references in subject responses. Table 6 contains the frequencies of each type of response.

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insert Table 6 about here

There were 9 references (H=4, A=1, L=4) to Nice. Statements such as "Ms. XX; she's really nice to us," and "Like when you get in trouble and the teacher just says something nice to you," were included in this category. Subjects also made four references (H=1, A=2, L=1) to Knowledge ("A good PE teacher like, uhm, they know how their hearts work, and what the lungs do."); four references (H=2, A=2) to Fun ("A fun one."); four references (H=2, A=2) to Discipline ("Someone who's not too strict."); and four references (H=1, A=2, L=1) to General Curriculum ("Like someone who would, like, teach lots of things, and like, try to have people, like, see if they know how to do things."). In addition, there were three references (A=2, L=1) to Safety ("Somebody who watches other people not to hurt anyone."); three references (A=2, L=1) to Skills ("Someone that can run really fast."); three references (H=1, A=2) to Participates With Kids ("They sometimes play with you if you don't have partner. They would say that they would like to play with you."); and three references (H=2, L=1) to Can Teach ("A PE teacher that can, like, teach you a lot of stuff so that you can learn and grow up to be smarter."). There were two references (L=2) to High Activity Level ("They let us have lots of time to be at a center."); two references (A=2) to Specific Activity ("One that would let us play basketball more often."); and 7 references to a variety of other issues

such as In Shape (A=1), Good With Kids (L=1), Doesn't Yell/Get Mad (L=1), Talks to Kids (A=1), Gives Free Time (H=1), and Doesn't Get Drunk (A=1).

Question 7: "What makes a bad PE teacher?"

A total of 41 references appeared in the subjects' responses. Table 7 presents the frequencies of response references by skill performance group.

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insert Table 7 about here

There were 6 references (H=2, A=1, L= 3) to Mean ("A grouchy one," and "If they're mean."). There were six references (H=3, A=2, L=1) to Too Strict ("Too much discipline and no fun!"), and five references (A=2, L=3) to Gets Mad/Yells ("Yelling and being mad at some of the kids."). Other responses included three references (A=2, L=1) to Doesn't Like Kids ("A person that doesn't like kids at all!"); three references (H=1, A=1, L=1) to Knowledge ("They don't know how their hearts work."); three references (H=1, A=1, L=1) to Doesn't Let You ("Doesn't let us play any games and do stations."); two references (H=1, A=1) to Won't Participate ("They wouldn't, like, play with you if you didn't have a partner."); two references (A=2) to Lack of Safety Concern ("Not making sure kids not get hurt."); and two references (A=2) to Teaches Unsafe Things ("If they teach you how to punch."). In addition, there were 9 references to a variety of other issues including: Lack of Discipline (A=1); Lack of Skills (A=1); Doesn't Like to Teach (A=1); Doesn't Have Fun (H=1); Teaches Easy Things (H=1); Limits Activity (L=1); Makes Us (H=1), Teaches Bad Behaviors (L=1); and Doesn't Make it Fun (A=1).

Discussion

The second grade subjects of this study all indicated they liked physical education when they were interviewed. Although this was quite encouraging and appears to be a positive reflection upon the elementary program of this district, the results could be related to the fact that the students were asked about physical education in the physical education class. Perhaps in a more neutral setting (not near the physical education class) or at a another time (before school, after school, during recess, etc.), the responses may have been different. Regardless, the positive expressions about physical education are encouraging and support much of the previous research (Butcher, 1982; Coe, 1984; McKenzie et al., 1994; Rice, 1988; Scott & West, 1990; Solmon & Carter, 1995; Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1993).

In the responses to Question 1 ("Do you like PE?" "Why?") and Question 2 ("Tell me something you really like about PE."), students made numerous references to the fact that physical education was fun, they enjoyed the activities/curriculum in general, they enjoyed learning specific games, activities and skills. These are quite similar to findings from research conducted on secondary students (Browne, 1992; Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Rice, 1988).

Goudas and Biddle (1993) asked 13 and 14 year old children what they liked most about physical education, and the majority of the responses referred to doing a specific sport or activity. Flohr and Williams (1997) interviewed elementary students and, similarly, found that students most enjoyed applying skills, or games. Those results are similar to the findings of this study, with most references made to a specific game or activity. When combined with references to a specific sport, this represented 57% of the

total references. Also similar to the Goudas and Biddle (1993) research findings, subjects in this study had the highest number of references relating to a specific game or activity when asked what they didn't like about physical education (Question 3). Luke's (1991) research on elementary students indicated that the three most influential aspects of physical education which determined if children liked or disliked physical education were the activities done during the lesson, the equipment used, and the skill focus of the lesson.

The second grade students in this study appeared to have some difficulty identifying what should and what should not be learned in physical education (Question 4 and Question 5). This makes sense, considering their exposure to physical education and physical education content has been quite limited to this point. The classes in this district, although having the benefit of physical education specialists, had class twice a week. As second graders, most subjects had received physical education instruction for less than three years. When asked what they should learn, a variety of themes emerged, with most references made to "Listen to the teacher." At the primary level, listening to the teacher is reinforced in all content and all areas of the school. Nugent and Faucette (1995) found that students who were learning disabled understood that to receive a high grade in physical education, they should listen to the teacher and do what the teacher says. Some kindergarten and first grade subjects in Solmon and Carter's (1995) study indicated that following rules and other management issues were what was expected to be learned in physical education. The variety of references to this question was interesting however, and many of them were related to physical education (Specific Skill, Rules, General Exercise, etc.).

Question 6 (What makes a good PE teacher?") and Question 7 ("What makes a bad PE teacher?") elicited references that were quite varied. Again, the limited physical experiences by these second graders may have contributed to the diverse responses. Most of the references were related to the physical education teacher being a "pleasant" person, e.g. one that is described as "nice," one that isn't "mean," one that isn't too strict and one that doesn't "yell" or "get mad." There were limited references to skill and knowledge competencies, which is understandable considering the age of the subjects. However, the research previously conducted on older subjects also found that students like teachers who are friendly, caring and sensitive (Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Rice, 1988; Stinson, 1992). Elementary students in Solmon and Carter's (1995) study indicated they liked physical education because they liked the teacher.

It is important to examine perceptions of low skilled students, as they perceive the physical education experience differently (Silverman, 1999). As Graham (1995a) suggests, the physical education class should not be a "one size fits all" environment. Students of different skill levels may have very different perceptions, needs, and interests and it would benefit physical educators to understand them. Despite the fact that all the subjects in this study liked physical education, there were slight differences in the responses. Low performance subjects (and sometimes average performance subjects) made more general references in their responses, particularly in Question 1. They often referred to "the games" or "the exercise," as opposed to specific games like "Tunnel Tag" or specific exercises like "push ups." The reason for this is unclear, although it could be that students in lower or average skill groups may look at the overall physical education experience, whereas the higher skill groups remember and attach meaning to specific

aspects of the physical education. Previous research suggests that students who are alienated, often the low skilled students, attach little personal meaning to physical education (Carlson, 1995).

It was also interesting to note that students in low and average skill performance groups made more references to Safety and/or Injury, and to Behavior-related issues. In all the responses to all the questions, subjects in the high performance group made only two references to Safety. However, there were eight references made by students in the average performance group and two from the low performance group. When examining Behavior-related responses, there were six references by students in the low performance group and six references from subjects in the average performance group, whereas there was only one reference from a subject in the high performance group. Students in high performance groups may not be quite as concerned about safety and behavior if they are rarely injured because they are successful at performing the skills, and the teachers spend little time on discipline management with these students because they are motivated to participate correctly.

Silverman and Subramaniam (1999) suggest that research on student attitudes in physical education can provide a more global view of the complexities of student learning. The results of this study will contribute to the limited research that has been conducted on elementary students' attitudes about physical education and physical education teachers. In particular, the study of skill subgroups allows researchers and practitioners to understand perceptions and experiences of different students as they learn in physical education.

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Table 1

Response References and Frequencies

Question 1: "Do you like PE?" If "Yes": "Why?" If "No": "Why not?"

Reference:	Frequency by Skill Performance Group:			
	High	Average	Low	Total
Fun	4	6	6	16
General Curriculum	1	6	6	13
General Exercise	1	5	5	11
Specific Skill	2	3	4	9
Specific Benefits	1	0	3	4
Environment/Setting	1	1	0	2
Specific Game/Activity	0	0	1	1
Equipment	0	0	1	1
Specific Event	0	1	0	1
Social	0	1	0	1
Do Not Know	1	0	0	1
Totals	11	23	26	60

*Note: All students responded to the initial question with "Yes."

Table 2

Response References and Frequencies

Question 2: "Tell me something you really like about PE."

Reference:	Frequency by Skill Performance Group:			
	High	Average	Low	Total
Specific Game/Activity	5	8	4	17
General Curriculum	1	2	2	5
Specific Equipment	2	2	0	4
Specific Sport	1	0	2	3
Free Choice/Choice Day	1	1	1	3
General Equipment	0	1	1	2
Social	0	0	1	1
Totals	10	14	11	35

Table 3

Response References and Frequencies

Question 3: "Tell me something you dislike about PE."

Reference:	Frequency by Skill Performance Group:			
	High	Average	Low	Total
Specific Game/Activity	5	8	2	15
Non-Success	2	1	3	6
Injury	1	1	0	2
Low Activity Level	0	0	2	2
Specific Sport	1	0	1	2
General Curriculum	0	1	1	2
Getting Tired/Sweaty	0	0	2	2
Lack of Choice	0	1	0	1
Other Students' Behavior	0	1	0	1
General Exercise	0	0	1	1
Totals	9	13	12	34

Table 4

Response References and Frequencies

Question 4: "What is the most important thing you should learn in PE?"

Reference:	Frequency by Skill Performance Group:			
	High	Average	Low	Total
Listen to Teacher	1	3	2	6
Benefits of Exercise	1	1	3	5
General Exercise	2	2	1	5
Safety	1	1	1	3
General Curriculum	0	1	2	3
Specific Skill	1	2	0	3
Equipment	0	1	1	2
Specific Game	0	1	1	2
Rules	0	1	1	2
Fun	0	1	1	2
Do Not Know	1	1	0	2
About Body	0	0	1	1
Stretching	0	1	0	1
Totals	7	16	14	37

Table 5

Response References and Frequencies

Question 5: "What is not very important to learn in PE?"

Reference:	Frequency by Skill Performance Group:			
	High	Average	Low	Total
Do Not Know	3	6	2	11
Specific Game/Activity	2	2	2	6
Something Previously Learned	1	0	4	5
Non-PE Behaviors	0	2	3	5
Specific Skill	0	0	2	2
General Curriculum	1	0	1	2
Specific Equipment	1	0	0	1
Specific Sport	0	1	0	1
Exercise Principles	0	1	0	1
Totals	8	12	14	34

Table 6

Response References and Frequencies

Question 6: "What makes a good PE teacher?"

Reference:	Frequency by Skill Performance Group:			
	High	Average	Low	Total
Nice	4	1	4	9
Knowledge	1	2	1	4
Fun	2	2	0	4
Discipline	2	2	0	4
General Curriculum	1	2	1	4
Safety	0	2	1	3
Skills	0	2	1	3
Participates with Kids	1	2	0	3
Can Teach	2	0	1	3
High Activity Level	0	0	2	2
Specific Activity	0	2	0	2
In Shape	0	1	0	1
Good With Kids	0	0	1	1
Doesn't Yell/Get Mad	0	0	1	1
Talks to Kids	0	1	0	1
Gives Free Time	1	0	0	1
Doesn't Get Drunk	0	1	0	1
Totals	14	20	13	47

Table 7

Response References and Frequencies

Question 7: "What makes a bad PE teacher?"

Reference:	Frequency by Skill Performance Group:			
	High	Average	Low	Total
Mean	2	1	3	6
Too Strict	3	2	1	6
Yells/Gets Mad	0	2	3	5
Doesn't Like Kids	0	2	1	3
Lack of Knowledge	1	1	1	3
Doesn't Let You . .	1	1	1	3
Won't Participate	1	1	0	2
Lack of Safety Concern	0	2	0	2
Teaches Unsafe Things	0	2	0	2
Lack of Discipline	0	1	0	1
Lack of Skills	0	1	0	1
Doesn't Like to Teach	0	1	0	1
Doesn't Have Fun	1	0	0	1
Teaches Easy Things	1	0	0	1
Limits Activity	0	0	1	1
Makes Us . .	1	0	0	1
Teaches Bad Behaviors	0	0	1	1
Doesn't Make it Fun	0	1	0	1
Totals	11	18	12	41

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Content of class sessions.

Class A, B (Teacher 1)

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
* Tagging game	* Tagging game	* Tagging game
* Throw/catch stations stations	* Throw/catch stations	* Throw/catch

Class C, D (Teacher 2)

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
* Teacher lead warm-up	* Various stations	* Partner combatives
* Underhand serve	* Cooperative game	
* Serving game		